

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED APR 6 1976
DATE ENTERED AUG 11 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC County Street Historic District
AND/OR COMMON same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER multiple
CITY, TOWN New Bedford
STATE Massachusetts
VICINITY OF 12
COUNTY Bristol
CODE 025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME multiple ownership
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN New Bedford
STATE Massachusetts

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Bristol County Registry of Deeds
STREET & NUMBER 6th Street
CITY, TOWN New Bedford
STATE Massachusetts

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Inventory of the Historic Assets of the Commonwealth/ HABS
DATE 1975/1936
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Massachusetts Historical Commission/Library of Congress
CITY, TOWN Boston/Washington D.C.
STATE Massachusetts

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The County Street Historic District in New Bedford is comprised of approximately 1,000 properties. The district includes the areas of New Bedford's residential development from about 1780-1890. The east boundary of the district, taking in the west side of Acushnet Street, was determined by the fact that modern low cost housing has been built on the east side of the street. The area on Union Street, excluded from the eastern portion of the district, is composed of late nineteenth and twentieth century commercial development, and does not relate to the residential character of the district. The northeast portion of the district encompasses the civic buildings of New Bedford, and includes the City Hall, Public Library, U.S. Post Office and the Registry of Deeds. The boundaries on the north were determined by the urban renewal area. Large blocks of housing, similar to that included in the district, were torn down in the urban renewal clearance program in the 1960's. Some new housing projects have been constructed; other areas remain vacant lots.

The west boundary was drawn to include the residential areas which tie in most closely with the late nineteenth century development around Cottage and Hawthorne Streets. The houses on the northern portion of Ash and Arch Streets are built on a smaller scale than the residences in the center of the district but represent an important part of New Bedford's residential development. The western portion of Hawthorne Street was included in the district because it contains a logical and continuous extension of the houses farther east on Hawthorne. The houses on Miriam, Stetson and Moreland Terrace were not included because modern bungalow construction dominates these blocks. The southern boundary of the district includes both sides of Bedford Street east to Sixth Street, then only the north side of the street until it meets the eastern boundary, Acushnet Street. Bedford Street acts as the dividing line between the residential areas in the district to the north and commercial development out of the district to the south. The south side of Bedford Street from Sixth Street to Acushnet was excluded to leave out the large mill buildings there which do not relate to the residential character of the district.

The southeast portion of the district along Pleasant, Purchase and Acushnet Streets is the oldest residential area of New Bedford. The oldest homes in New Bedford, dating from 1780-1820, are located here, although the general character of the neighborhood as it looks today is derived from its mid-nineteenth century Greek Revival vernacular architecture. The house at the corner of Seventh and Walnut (223 Walnut Street, photo #2) is one of the few remaining late eighteenth century buildings in the area. The streetscapes are remarkably unified in setback, mass and height. Greek Revival details with a few Italianate and bracketed embellishments relate the buildings visually to each other. Though this area has deteriorated in the last few decades and many of the houses have been covered with asbestos shingles and other non-wood sidings, the architectural detail has remained intact.

The character of the district changes as one proceeds westward. Sixth and Seventh Streets between Spring and Madison Streets contain many fine Federal period homes. Of particular note is the Standish House, on the corner of Sixth and School Streets (photo #5). This house, built in 1831, is typical of the brick, hip roofed structures, five bays wide with a center entrance, built for New Bedford's sea captains and merchants in the early part of the nineteenth century.

County Street, the pivotal street in the district, was developed as a wealthy residential neighborhood between 1825-50. The Greek Revival style overshadowed all other building

continued

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The County Street Historic District in New Bedford is significant as an area where the development of architecture in New England from 1780-1850 can be traced according to logical development patterns. The district is also significant for its relationship to the prosperous merchants and whalers who were so influential in the development of Massachusetts in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Bedford Village, originally part of Dartmouth, was first settled in 1640. Up to 1760 the village contained not more than a dozen scattered farms owned by Quakers who had moved there from Rhode Island and Cape Cod. The real development of Bedford Village started in 1765 when Joseph Russell, one of the Quaker landowners, sold ten acres of his farm near the waterfront to Joseph Rotch to be divided into house and commercial lots. Russell, who is called the Father of New Bedford because he named the town after the Duke of Bedford, turned to whaling on a small scale. Within a few years ship builders had been attracted to the village; the first ship to be constructed here was the Dartmouth, of Boston Tea Party fame. Because of New Bedford's growing stature as a rendezvous for American privateers who preyed upon British shipping during the period of increasing tension between Britain and the Colonies, the British invaded the town in 1778, burning all the homes, ships and commercial structures of the patriots. Because of this wholesale destruction there is little left of New Bedford's earliest settlement.

The growth and development of the existing district in the City of New Bedford occurred in three major phases corresponding geographically to the areas east of County Street, along County Street, and west of County Street. During the period between the two wars with England, New Bedford developed its ship building and whaling industries. Many of the merchants who owned the ship yards and whaling vessels were Quakers, and the architecture from this era reflects their belief in simplicity and their desire to avoid ostentation. Most of the houses built by these merchants were designed on the same plan, with a five bay symmetrical facade, center entrance, and ridge roof.

After the War of 1812 New Bedford continued to develop as a whaling port. By 1820 the town had exceeded the amount of whaling revenues that Nantucket gathered and continued to lead the field in receipts from whaling until the 1850's, absorbing almost all of the Atlantic seaboard whaling. During this period of great prosperity from c. 1820-1850, the New Bedford merchants built imposing mansions along Sixth and Seventh Streets, and finally, on County Street. Some of the more architecturally significant buildings include the Standish House (photo #5), built by Levi Standish in 1831, the William Rotch Rodman Mansion (photo #8) built in 1833, and the William Rotch, Jr. House (photo #9) built c. 1840. These houses were built on a comfortable and then a grand scale and accurately represented the most current architectural trends of their time. The Quaker beliefs of these merchants still exerted a sobering influence but the houses were obviously built and lived in by the wealthy.

continued

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Amadon, Elizabeth R., Historical Research Report for the Rotch Rodman House, New Bedford Massachusetts, RARE Inc., Cambridge, 1966
 City maps from 1850, 1871, 1881, 1895 and 1912
 Pease, History of New Bedford
 Photographs of Old Houses in Dartmouth, Henry Worth

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 100 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	19	339600	4611060	B	19	339720	46110150
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	19	338540	4610920	D	19	338460	4610940

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

see map

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Christine Boulding, Preservation Planner, and Warren Oxley

ORGANIZATION

Massachusetts Historical Commission

DATE

March 1976

STREET & NUMBER

294 Washington Street

TELEPHONE

617-872-8470

CITY OR TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts 0210 8

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Elizabeth Reed Amadon

TITLE

Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission

DATE

3/30/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ACCEDES

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

8/16/76

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

8-5-76

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styles during this period and many classic examples of this period are still extant. An outstanding example of this style is the William Rotch Rodman House (photo #8) designed by Russell Warren and built in 1833. The William Rotch Jr. House (photo #9), also on County Street, is another fine example of the Greek Revival style with some Italianate detail.

The area west of County Street was the next residential area to be developed. Large mansions, varying in style from the severe Greek Revival (photo #10) to the elaborate and fanciful Gothic Revival, as exemplified by the William Rotch house (photo #11), were constructed. Union Street, running west from County Street, contains outstanding examples of the Italianate and mansard styles (photos #12 and 13). Cottage Street, running north and south, exhibits many fine Greek Revival buildings (photo #14) and Queen Anne houses (photos #15 and 16). This area west of County Street also contains a large number of Gothic Cottages, including a house at 27 Maple Street (photo #18), 7 Irving Street (photo #19), and 26 Grove Street (photo #20).

The houses on Morgan and Court Streets in the northwest portion of the district are smaller buildings with gable end to the street. Arch, Ash, and Lincoln Streets (photo #21) also contain smaller scale structures built on narrow lots in the Colonial Revival and Italianate styles, with many small, gable end to the street vernacular structures (photo 2). Bedford Street, the south boundary of the district, also contains mostly gable end to the street structures with stick style, Italianate and Queen Anne architectural details (photos #23 and 24).

The major intrusions in the district are along County Street where some mid-twentieth century apartment buildings and commercial structures have been erected. These include the Joseph P. Kennedy Youth Center (379 County Street), the Roosevelt Apartments (northwest corner of County and Arnold Streets), and a modern commercial block on the east side of County Street between Union and Spring Streets. The areas east and west of County Street also contain a few modern intrusions but these buildings do not detract significantly from the character of the district.

The northeast corner of the district contains the City Hall, an impressive late nineteenth century brick structure, the Public Library, and the Post Office, a Beaux Arts Building. It also contains a few unified streets of small scale, late nineteenth century and early twentieth century residential development, which have been saved from urban renewal clearance.

The district, while it is incredibly large, does contain a sense of unity and cohesiveness. While commercial intrusions are gradually encroaching on the district, the entire area is still distinctly residential and contains a large number of buildings with outstanding architectural significance. Other buildings in the district, of lesser architectural quality or significance, unify the streetscapes so that the total sum of the inter-relationships of the buildings form a whole which is greater than its parts.

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Please delete the 5th sentence of the first paragraph of the physical description and add the following: The northeast portion of the district includes smaller scale, more modest residential development, but stops short of the city civic buildings.

Please delete the first sentence of the fifth paragraph of the physical description, continuation sheet #1 and add the following: The northeast corner of the district contains a few unified streets of small scale, late nineteenth century and early twentieth century residential development which have been saved from urban renewal clearance.

#10 Verbal Boundary Description

The southeast corner of the district is located at the intersection of Bedford and Acushnet Streets. The boundary then proceeds north along the middle of Acushnet Street to School Street, then goes west along the middle of School Street to the back lot line of the property located at 20 South Sixth Street, then north along the back lot lines of the properties on the east side of South Sixth Street to the middle of Spring Street, then west along the middle of Spring Street to the east boundary of the Friends Meetinghouse, then north along the Meetinghouse lot line, then west along the Meetinghouse back lot line, then south along the Meetinghouse west boundary, then west along the middle of Spring Street to Eighth Street, then north along the middle of Eighth Street, then east along the middle of Union Street to the east boundary of 281 Union Street, then north to Park Place, then east on Park Place to the back lot line of the Registry of Deeds, then north to Mechanics Lane along the east boundary of the First Baptist Church, then north along the east lot lines of 47 Mechanics Lane and 156 and 153 Elm Street and 192 and 193 Middle Street to the back lot line of 192 Middle Street, then west along the back lot lines of the properties on Middle Street to County Street, then south on County Street to the center of Middle Street, then west on Middle Street to the back lot line of 485 County Street, then south along the back lot lines of the properties on the north side of Morgan Street to the west lot line of 65 Morgan Street then south along the back lot lines of the properties on the west side of Cottage Street to the middle of Union Street, then west along the middle of Union Street to the west lot line of 398 Union Street, then south along the back lot lines of the properties on the west side of Ash Street to the back lot line of 111 Hawthorn Street, then west along the back lot lines of the properties on the north side of Hawthorn Street to the west boundary of 129 Hawthorn Street, then south down the middle of Page Street to the back lot line of 150 Hawthorn Street, then east along the back lot lines of the properties on the south side of Hawthorn Street to the west side of Ash Street, then south along the west side of Ash Street to the back lot line of 156 Bedford Street, then east along the back lot lines of the properties on the south side of Bedford Street to South Sixth Street, then east along the middle of Bedford Street to Achushnet Street.

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In 1845 New Bedford reached its peak year in the whaling industry, gathering 158,000 barrels of sperm oil, 272,000 barrels of whale oil and 3,000,000 pounds of whalebone. As the fortunes of the merchants increased, the pressures for new residential development multiplied and the land west of County Street, on high land overlooking the harbor, was built up. As the citizens grew wealthier, their Quaker zeal for simplicity waned, and large houses were constructed in the new and fashionable Gothic Revival and Gothic Cottage styles. An outstanding example of this style is the William J. Rotch House (photo #10), designed by A.J. Davis and William R. Emerson and built in 1846.

In 1857 the discovery of oil in Pennsylvania doomed the whaling industry but New Bedford, instead of suffering an economic recession, turned instead to the manufacture of textiles. The first textile plant, the Wamsutta Mills, was chartered in 1846, but the industry grew slowly because whaling was still the dominant economic force in New Bedford. When the whale oil market failed, the mills took over and became the commercial and industrial backbone of New Bedford. The owners of these mills continued to build large houses and mansions in the area west of County Street, in all the variety of styles which became fashionable in the second half of the nineteenth century. Fine examples of Italianate, Mansard, Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival, Stick Style, Colonial Revival and Gothic Revival houses exist in the district.

Smaller scale Colonial Revival and vernacular gable end to the street buildings were also constructed west of County Street, towards the end of the nineteenth century, to house the mills' white collar workers. The area east of County Street, which had first been developed before the War of 1812, was redeveloped to provide housing for the mill workers, and took on the character it has at present, containing small, three bay, gable end to the street structures, all with the same setback and height.

The first decade of this century marked the beginning of New Bedford's economic decline. The textile mills, attracted by cheap labor and materials in the South, began to leave the city. The depression wreaked further havoc on New Bedford's economy and caused an end to any major residential building in the district. The city's economy is still depressed, but a certain amount of fishing and shipping activity keeps the harbor going as a viable working port, and a few textile mills and other light industry provide jobs for the city's residents. Massive urban renewal programs in the 1960's threatened portions of the district, and succeeded in tearing down whole blocks of small scale housing similar to that existing in parts of the district just north and northwest of the Center Street Historic District. The district itself, however, has remained almost intact, though sections have deteriorated, and commercial intrusions have begun to encroach on the district along County Street and in the area around City Hall. Future plans for the area call for the rehabilitation of the deteriorated housing stock and public improvements along County Street in order to revitalize the district. The area will remain in essentially residential use.